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MEMOIR

OF

GEORGE FRISBIE HOAR.

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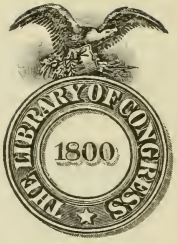

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GEORGE FRISBIE HOAR.

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PREPARED FOR

THE MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

BOSTON:
1905.

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MEMOIR

OF

GEORGE FRISBIE HOAR.

BY NATHANIEL PAINE AND G. STANLEY HALL.

In preparing this memoir the committee to whom it was assigned have had in mind the fact that Senator Lodge has already made a communication to the Society in commemoration of Senator Hoar, and that his public career has been characterized by many of his colleagues in the special services held by the Senate of the United States and the House of Representatives, before the Massachusetts Legislature, and also in no less than forty-seven hundred editorials in as many American newspapers, which have been collected; therefore the committee will confine themselves for the most part to Mr. Hoar's private life as known to those who saw the most of him in and about Worcester.

George Frisbie Hoar was the son of Samuel and Sarah Sherman Hoar, and was born at Concord, Massachusetts, August 29, 1826. He graduated at Harvard University in the class of 1846, and in 1849 became a resident of Worcester. In his Autobiography he says: "I chose Worcester as a place to live in for the reason that that city and county were the strongholds of the new anti-slavery party, to which cause I was devoted with all my heart and soul." One of his first public speeches was at an anti-slavery meeting in the City Hall of Worcester, at which Judge Charles Allen presided. On coming to Worcester he became a member of the Worcester Bar, and three years later entered into partnership with Hon. Emory Washburn. Later he was a law partner of the late Attorney-General Devens and J. Henry Hill.

He very soon showed an interest in municipal affairs, and was twice nominated for Mayor of Worcester, but declined to accept the nomination. He took an active part in the politics

of the time, and for several years was chairman of the county committee. In 1852 he was elected a representative from Worcester to the General Court, was State Senator in 1857, and made chairman of the Judiciary Committee.

His fellow citizens highly appreciated his ability and statesmanlike qualities, and in 1868 made him a Member of Congress, where he served until the Massachusetts Legislature elected him to the United States Senate in 1877, of which body he was a member until his death, September 30, 1904.

Very soon after settling in Worcester he became interested in its literary and educational institutions, which interest he maintained until his death.

In August, 1852, he presided at a meeting of those interested in forming a society for the benefit of the young men of the city, which was organized under the name of "The Young Men's Library Association," and was a prominent factor in Worcester literary life for many years. Mr. Hoar was chosen vice-president of the new society, and from 1853 to 1856 was its president. In the latter year, this society was united with the Worcester Lyceum, an association founded in 1829 for the purpose of conducting a course of lectures during the winter months. He was president of the Library Association at the time the union was effected, and took great interest in its consummation. It was the Lyceum and Library Association that was largely instrumental in the establishment of the Free Public Library of Worcester. With his usual public spirit, Mr. Hoar started a subscription for the support of this library, and was a director from 1862 to 1867 and president in 1866–1867.

He was a member of the first board of directors of the "Free Institute of Industrial Science," now the Worcester Polytechnic Institute, and remained a member of the board of trustees until his death.

Though a young man, only twenty-seven years of age, his antiquarian and historical interests caused him to be elected a member of the American Antiquarian Society in 1853, of which he was president from 1884 to 1888, and vice-president from the latter date until his death. His voice was often heard at meetings of the society, and he prepared valuable historical and antiquarian papers which were published in the Proceedings. Representing the Antiquarian Society, he took an active part in 1896–1897 in the return to this country of the Bradford

manuscript, " The Log of the Mayflower." Among the papers presented by him were " President Garfield's New England Ancestry," in October, 1881 ; " Obligations of New England to the County of Kent," in April, 1885 ; and " The Connecticut Compromise," April, 1902. He retained his interest in the society until his death, and in his last illness expressed the hope that he might be able to prepare one more paper which he had in mind for its Proceedings.

He was chosen a member of the Massachusetts Historical Society in November, 1886, and was always interested in its objects, and attended meetings whenever his duties at Washington would permit. He often made remarks at the meetings, besides preparing special papers. One of the most important of these was on " Possible Changes in the Course of History." He also prepared a memoir of Judge Horace Gray, and in May, 1901, spoke at some length on the return of the Bradford manuscript.

Upon the incorporation of Clark University, in 1887, he was selected by the founder as one of the trustees, and was at once chosen vice-president of the board. Upon the death of the founder, he became president of the board, and held this office at the time of his death. It was through his instrumentality that Dr. G. Stanley Hall was selected as its president, and brought to Worcester from the Johns Hopkins University, where for eight years he had held a professorship.

Mr. Hoar always took a deep interest in the affairs of the University, to which he contributed a large number of books and pamphlets, and was an earnest advocate of the policy of advanced academic work and original research. Upon the death of the founder, he cheerfully assumed the chief burden of the very grave problem involved in his will. It was chiefly through his agency that the estate was finally settled in the interests of the University, — the will given a clear and legal interpretation according to the founder's purpose, — a collegiate department established, and the Hon. Carroll D. Wright brought from the head of the Labor Bureau at Washington to the presidency of the undergraduate department, in which Senator Hoar before his death took a very deep interest. His own addresses at the inauguration of President Hall in 1899, and of President Wright in 1902, will always be remembered for their earnestness and breadth of view by all who heard or

read them. Of all the institutions in Worcester that enjoyed the benefit of his counsels and his services, none has occasion to remember them with profounder gratitude than the University.

Mr. Hoar's scholarship and his literary abilities were recognized by several learned bodies. In 1873 the honorary degree of LL.D. was conferred upon him by William and Mary College, followed by the same degree from Amherst College in 1879, from Yale University in 1885, and from his Alma Mater, Harvard University, in 1886. Mr. Hoar was a member of the famous Saturday Club of Boston, having as his associates many eminent men like Agassiz, Emerson, Lowell, Longfellow, Prescott, Dana, and Adams.

In April, 1901, the Rufus Putnam Memorial Association was formed to purchase the homestead of General Putnam at Rutland, Massachusetts. Of the work done here, Senator Hoar was the moving spirit from its inception until his death. By his own exertions he obtained subscriptions sufficient to pay for the property, and made a large collection of colonial furniture, not only from this country, but from England, and personally conducted its installation in the various rooms of the old homestead. Thus this association, which indirectly grew out of Mr. Hoar's memorable address at Marietta, Ohio, commemorating General Putnam's great achievement of opening the Northwest, was entirely his work, and one of his favorite recreations the last few summers of his life was to make frequent visits to Rutland with companies of his friends.

In 1902, upon Mr. Hoar's initiative, the Worcester County Devens Statue Commission was incorporated, naming him as the first member of the commission, of which he remained chairman until his death. He took the liveliest interest in this object up to the time of his death, and in his last illness expressed regret that he could not live to see the statue completed and placed in position in front of the Worcester Court House.

One of Senator Hoar's marked traits of character was his passionate love of country life, and the great enjoyment he derived from drives and trolley rides with his friends to visit favorite points. Among these should be mentioned Asnebumskit Hill, which he purchased and which he frequently visited. This hill is the highest land in Worcester County, with the exception of Mount Wachusett and Little Wachusett, and it

commands a fine view of Worcester and the surrounding country. He purchased Asnebumskit, as he said, to own a part of the horizon. Another favorite excursion was to Redemption Rock in Westminster, upon which was placed a tablet with the inscription, "On this rock, May 2, 1676, was made the agreement for the ransom of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson of Lancaster between John Hoar of Concord and the Indians." He knew intimately all of even the out-of-the-way roads within convenient driving distance of Worcester, and of every township in the county and of many dwellings had interesting personal reminiscences.

His afternoon drives were to Rutland, Auburn, Sutton, Millbury, while the trolley rides of which he came to be very fond extended farther — to Spencer, Southbridge, Oxford, Clinton, Lancaster, and Marlboro. Occasionally longer excursions involving one or two nights spent away from home were taken with a chosen few. Concord, Lexington, Monadnock, Ashfield, and Deerfield were among these. He had been retained as counsel by nearly every town in the county, and as he grew old was fond of visiting graveyards and recalling those he had known. On his excursions he desired invariably to be host, and only occasionally, by strategy, were his friends enabled to bear their own share of the expenses. It seemed often a positive passion with him to do favors for, and even to give little pleasures to, his friends. To this end he often seemed to spare no pains, and gave great thought, and sometimes made preparations long in advance, to bestow a favor that would be most cherished.

To those who accompanied him in these frequent excursions, he was not only the most delightful companion, giving his marvellous conversational powers full sway, but he often seemed to enter into the enjoyment of the moment with an abandon that was a characteristic expression of the perennial youthfulness of his nature. Such excursions, too, were frequently an opportunity for discussing practical problems and doing committee work with others, and also of enlisting their interest in projects he had at heart. Up to within a few days of his final illness, he found great pleasure and recreation in such excursions, interpersed as they often were by colloquies with residents along the routes, all of whom he knew, and most of the older of whom knew him.

He often spoke of his finances and of his limited resources, and could not understand why men are often so secretive about their financial matters. He always made full and complete returns to the assessors, and declared that his best investments were made when he paid his taxes. He subscribed, and often with surprising generosity for a man of his means, to nearly every worthy cause that was presented. He made no charges for addresses or political speeches, and was content to have his travelling expenses paid, but often indifferent even about that.

His delight in country life and his enjoyment of nature, his rare fondness for birds, and, entirely unmusical as he was, his passion for listening to their singing, were very prominent traits of his character.

He was a great friend of children and young people, and often carried about quarters and half-dollars fresh from the mint to give to those he met.

His manner of life was very simple ; his love of literature of the best the English language afforded was a marked characteristic, and coupled with his love of nature made him a most genial companion, to which those who were honored with his friendship will bear witness. He was a great lover of books, and it was in his library that he most enjoyed himself, and where he spent many quiet and restful hours. He enjoyed showing his rare books to friends who were interested in them. In speaking of his way of living he once said, "I have been in my day an extravagant collector of books, and have a library which you would like to see and which I should like to show you." Many of the most valuable books are enriched by the addition of autograph letters of the authors, and in these he took especial pride. His familiarity with English literature and history made him at home in London in a way that often surprised his American fellow travellers.

A man of great ability, and one who received the highest honors from the State and nation, yet to the humblest of his friends he was on such good terms of fellowship that one could not but feel at ease in his company. With a delightful conversational power and a most remarkable memory that could at once call to mind words of wisdom or of humor from the best in English literature, his society was a pleasure and an inspiration to those privileged and honored by his friendship.

Owing to Senator Hoar's good taste and his choice command of good English, he was often called upon to furnish inscriptions for monuments and public places. For instance, when the new Court House in Worcester was built, he was called upon to furnish fitting lines to be placed over an arch in the main entrance, and he suggested the following, which was adopted: "Here speaketh the conscience of the State restraining the individual."

The inscription on his father's monument in Sleepy Hollow Cemetery, Concord, Massachusetts, as furnished by Mr. Hoar, is: —

"He was long one of the most eminent lawyers and best beloved citizens of Massachusetts. A safe counsellor and kind neighbor, a Christian gentleman. He had a dignity that commanded the respect, and a sweetness and modesty that won the affection of all men. He practised an economy that never wasted, and a liberality that never spared. Of proved capacity for the highest offices, he never avoided obscure duties. He never sought station or eminence, and never shrank from positions of danger or obloquy. His days were made happy by public esteem and private affection. To the last moment of his long life he preserved his clear intellect unimpaired, and fully conscious of its approach met death with the perfect assurance of immortal life."

Another, upon John Prescott, is as follows: —

"Here with his children about him lies John Prescott, founder of Lancaster and first settler of Worcester County. Born at Standish, Lancashire, England; died at Lancaster, Massachusetts, Dec. 1681. Inspired by the love of liberty and the fear of God, this stout-hearted pioneer, forsaking the pleasant vales of England, took up his abode in the unbroken forest and encountered wild beast and savage to secure freedom for himself and his posterity. His faith and virtues have been inherited by many descendants who in every generation have well served the State in war, in literature, at the bar, in the pulpit, in public life, and in Christian homes."

It has been sometimes said that Senator Hoar's services in Congress were not of a practical nature. As an illustration of his ability and efficiency in bringing forward practical questions for the consideration of Congress, we append the following list of bills which he drafted and of which he secured the passage in Congress, with a reference to other official services rendered by him: —

Presidential Succession Bill.
National Bankruptcy Bill.
Electoral Commission Bill and Service on Commission.
Bill for Settlement of Southern Claims. Ten years' service on such committee.
Bills for relief of Southern Colleges and for losses during Civil War.
Chairman Judiciary Committee for fourteen years. Every bill passed by Congress examined and approved by him during that time.
Author of so-called Sherman Trust Bill.
Author of Bureau Education Bill.
Author of Eads Jetty Bill.
Bill Limiting the Franchise in the Philippine Islands by which great frauds were defeated.
Bill for Relief of Educational Institutions from tax of 15% on legacy.
Secured repeal Civil Tenure Bill.
Bill establishing salaries of U. S. Judiciary.

Other evidence might be added, if necessary, that he was often of assistance to others in preparing important bills.

For many years several of the ablest American newspapers were frequently outspoken in their criticism of his public acts. One of the remarkable incidents in the period following his death is the fact that journals like the Chicago Tribune, the New York Evening Post, the Springfield Republican, and the Boston Herald seemed to vie with each other in glorifying his memory. Says the former, August 19: —

"To-day, as in the past, calumny loves to besmirch the reputations of public men. Senator Hoar is one of those she has never dared to attack. No one has ever ventured even to insinuate a suspicion of his integrity or sincerity. Public life has not been a mine of wealth for him. As he said a year ago, if he had never entered it and had kept to his profession, he would have been well off, instead of having only a trifle to leave his heirs. But when he bids farewell to earth, he will leave a possession which the gold of all the multi-millionaires cannot buy, — the fame of having served his country long and well, of having taken his moral principles into politics with him to guide his course, of having been true to his ideals, no matter what the odds were against him, and of having stood up bravely to rebuke the party he loved when he thought it was in the wrong."

Mr. Hoar was a religious man, very broad and liberal in his views, and tolerant of the religious views of others. One of

his utterances, which may well be quoted here, was this: "I have no faith in fatalism, in destiny, in blind force. I believe in God, the living God, in the American people who do not bow the neck or bend the knee to any other, and who desire no other to bow the neck or bend the knee to them. I believe, finally, that whatever clouds may darken the horizon, the world is growing better, that to-day is better than yesterday, and to-morrow will be better than to-day." He was a regular attendant at church, and had very strong convictions as to the duty and necessity of it. In one of his published addresses he said: "There is, in my judgment, no more commanding public duty than attendance at church on Sunday. . . . Let there be one place and one hour devoted to quiet, from which the world is shut out, as it is shut out on a long voyage at sea."

The two religious doctrines to which he held almost passionately were the belief in God and in a future life. Many times on excursions with his friends, especially in his later years, he would revert to these topics, ask their opinions, and usually in the end express his own with very great positiveness. These appeared to be the fundamental articles of his creed, and it was hard for him to see how any one could in any degree doubt them.

Bravely as he used to say that he did not fear growing old, he had not taken into account the loss of relatives and friends by death and its consequent loneliness. In an address given several years ago before a society of gentlemen at Worcester, he said: —

"The greatest penalty of growing old is the loss of the friends of youth. Dying to a brave man, certainly to a brave old man, is in the death of others, not in his own. It is this which alike gives age its terror, and is the chief reconciler and consoler as the end of life comes on. When the voices that were its music are silent, it's well that the ears grow dumb. When the faces which were their delight have vanished, it is well that the eyes grow dim. In some rare examples of old men, too, this is largely compensated by that which, except health of body and mind, is the best gift of God to man, — a large capacity for friendship, which takes in and welcomes the new generations as they come."[1]

[1] From a centennial address entitled "Old Age and Immortality," before the Worcester Fire Society, January 21, 1893.

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Senator Gorman, of Maryland, in his eulogy of Mr. Hoar, says: —

"He was a partisan without rancor, an antagonist without bitterness, a friend without reservation and conditions, a conqueror without vengeance, a loser without resentment."

Senator Lodge's resolution contains the following: —

"His life was given to the service of his country and of his fellowmen. For forty years he was one of those who guided and watched over the fortunes of the republic. His achievements are written in the history of the United States. Patriot and statesman, orator and scholar, a lawyer, a jurist, and a great senator and leader of men. . . . His abilities were commanding, his ideals noble, his conduct of life followed the loftiest standards. Pure of heart, stainless in honor, tender in his affections, fearless and unswerving in the path of duty, unfaltering in his loyalty to friends and to country, his life will be an example and an inspiration to the generations yet to be. He has died at the summit of his great career. He met death with the serene courage which had never failed him in the trials of life, surrounded by all that should accompany old age, — honor, love, obedience, troops of friends. So he passed over, and all the trumpets sounded on the other side."

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